

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3012

November 21, 2022

Rory M. Christian  
Chair and Chief Executive Office  
State of New York Public Service Commission  
3 Madison Ave  
Albany, NY 12223

Re: CASE 22-E-0064 (Proceeding on Motion of the Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules, and Regulations of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. for Electric Service) and CASE 22-G-0065 (Proceeding on Motion of the Commission as to the Rates, Charges, Rules and Regulations of Consolidated Edison Company of New York, Inc. for Gas Service)

Dear Chair Christian:

I write today to submit a public comment on two ongoing cases put forward by Consolidated Edison Company of New York (Con Ed): CASE 22-E-0064 and CASE 22-G-0065. On behalf of my constituents in New York's 16th Congressional District, which encompasses the Northern Bronx and Westchester County, I have strong concerns about these rate hikes and fossil fuel infrastructure expansions proposed by Con Ed, and urge the Commission to take into account the negative impact they would have on households already struggling to pay their utility bills, as well as our collective efforts to decarbonize our economy.

Since coming into office, I have prioritized the issue of energy and utility justice, recognizing the outsized impacts that utility costs and environmental injustice have on my constituents. Over the last year, the compounding crises of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency, global war, inflation, and worsening racial inequities have underscored how vital electricity, heating, and cooling services are to families in New York. I have heard from Con Ed customers in my district whose home energy bills have doubled or even tripled in cost over the last year. In addition, small business owners in my district have been forced to pay astronomically high energy bills that they simply cannot afford, hurting their financial well-being and their ability to contribute to the fabric of our communities. The struggle to pay increasingly expensive utility bills is evident in the data, with more than 411,000 Con Ed customers in New York State facing arrears as of January 2022.<sup>1</sup> Rate hikes like this force my constituents to live and work in unsafe conditions, which is unconscionable. This underscores the importance of policy solutions that

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<sup>1</sup> New York State Department of Public Service. "Proceeding on Motion of the Commission to examine the collection practices of the major gas and electric utilities in New York State to identify ways to reduce losses due to uncollectibles while maintaining a high level of customer service." Accessed at <https://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterSeq=1331&MNO=91-M-0744>

decrease utility costs and support customers' ability to pay, so that no one is forced to choose between turning on the heat and putting food on the table.

I am deeply concerned that the additional rate hikes being proposed would further diminish the purchasing power of federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funding, putting households and small businesses in an even more dire financial position to stay safe during this winter. At the federal level, I have been a strong advocate for expanding and improving LIHEAP, which provides one-time emergency utility bill support within a given calendar year to low-income families across the country to help subsidize the cost of heating and cooling their home. Currently, approximately 2.2 million New Yorkers are eligible for LIHEAP.<sup>2</sup> However, the combination of a lack of sufficient funding for LIHEAP and increased energy bills over the last year means that this program has failed to adequately support New Yorkers.<sup>3</sup> Raising utility rates further will impose unfair constraints on overburdened families who receive limited federal assistance.

Further, I have strong concerns with Con Ed's proposed expansion of fracked gas transmission line infrastructure in my district that would ensue from this proposal. The federal government recently passed H.R. 5376 - Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, which is an historic investment in renewable energy infrastructure that has the potential to accelerate clean energy deployment across New York State.<sup>4</sup> For too many years, marginalized communities in my district have suffered from fossil fuel pollution that threatens their health, causes more extreme weather events like Hurricane Ida, and leaves them in fear of the climate crisis at our doorstep. An expansion of fracked gas transmission infrastructure could further harm them by increasing their exposure to fossil fuels. Now is the time to leverage federal clean energy funding to decarbonize our energy sector, not expand fracked gas infrastructure.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the Commission to provide a full and fair consideration to the impact this proposal would have on my constituents in New York's 16th Congressional District. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to submit public comments on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> National Energy and Utility Affordability Coalition (NEUAC). "New York by the Numbers." Accessed November 1 2022 at <https://neuac.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/New-York-State-Sheet-2023.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Between Fiscal Year 2010 and Fiscal Year 2020, LIHEAP funding to New York State decreased by 21.27%. For more information on New York LIHEAP funding trends, see: <https://neuac.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/New-York-State-Sheet-2023.pdf> for more information.

<sup>4</sup> Text - H.R.5376 - 117th Congress (2021-2022): Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. (2022, August 16). <http://www.congress.gov/>